GUIDELINES FOR THE PASTORAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE RITES OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION

Diocese of Pennsylvania
1995

Contents of the Guidelines:

Introduction	1
A. Holy Baptism	4
A.1 Baptism	
A.2 Candidates	4
A.3 Sponsors	7
A.4 Preparation for Baptism	8
A.5 Occasions and Ceremonial	11
B. Baptism and Eucharist	15
C. Living the Christian Life After Baptism	18
D. Rites of Renewal of Faith:	19
Confirmation	
Reception	
Reaffirmation	
Conclusion	25
suggested further reading	25

Introduction

The following guidelines seek to help the congregations of the Diocese of Pennsylvania to move towards common understanding and practice in the pastoral administration of the rites of Christian initiation. Baptism touches every church member; it is a foundational sign of the gospel-formed people, a mark of Christian identity and membership. Hence, it is desirable that we think and act in similar ways as we bring persons to membership in the church.

Although we all seek to follow the 1979 Prayer Book, some things in our Prayer Book rites of Christian initiation are not self-evident even to those who have been using them faithfully. What does the church's liturgy require, allow, or prohibit with respect to baptism? Many things in it are different from past Prayer Books, but not everyone has had an opportunity to inquire into the changes. May congregations establish qualifications for parents who seek baptism for their children? Some do, and some do not. Can a priest ever refuse a request for baptism? Some do, and some think that in conscience they cannot. Is baptism alone the sacramental pre-requisite for admission to Holy Communion? Or is it baptism plus episcopal confirmation? In this matter, customs differ. What is the role of the bishop in the acts which begin and sustain the life of faith? What about confirmation -- an old term, but with a partially new meaning? What about the reception of baptized Christians from other churches -- something which had long been done, but without guidance from Prayer Book or canons? What about the "reaffirmation of baptismal vows" -- an act which is new in the present book and is offered without much explanation of its function? What is this new-old thing "the catechumenate?"

These guidelines approach such questions principally through the Prayer Book, the authorized text which binds Episcopalians together as a liturgical communion. Its enablings and its restraints direct us all in this Christian-making, church-shaping ministry of baptism.

Our task in the pastoral administration of the rites of Christian initiation is not, however, just a matter of construing texts and rubrics. The Prayer Book necessarily leaves to clergy and congregations a large area of pastoral judgment; and what is done in that discretionary area should carry out the theology and the intentions of the authorized rites.

Beyond rubrics and pastoral wisdom, following the lead of the Prayer Book is ultimately a matter of vision -- a sense of Christ, the church, the Christian, and the ultimate purpose of God. Baptism is the enactment of a great gospel. Its liturgy has much still-unfulfilled power to inform and renew the life we hold and share.

To the extent that we come to our ways of understanding and administering the church's initiatory rites as individual priests or isolated congregations we can create a situation in which in different parishes of one church devout Christian people are treated differently in the basic matter of personal identity and corporate belonging. It seems desirable therefore that we approach the matter as a diocese. We do so partly because the bishop has a role in a number of the initiatory actions; they are always, at least in part, the bishop's services. But beyond ministerial roles, serious differences of teaching and practice at the point of membership can create not only confusion and pain, but real sacramental and canonical injustice. Finding a common spirit, common understandings, and common ways for discharging this common pastoral task gracefully, particularly at a time of change, seems to be the very sort of thing for which episcopacy and diocesan structures exist.

Therefore we propose these guidelines for the administration both of baptism and of the acts in which we renew the promises of baptism. Many clergy and congregations will find that these recommendations support all or most of their current practice. Indeed, all readers should be at least partially affirmed in what they have been doing. Where the

guidelines would require change, it is hoped that these proposals and the suggested reasons for them will carry some inherent persuasiveness.

No doubt no single pattern for administering rites of initiation and of the renewal of faith will be equally applicable in every parish of this diocese. Some diversity is to be expected as congregations, bringing their own prior experience and working in their specific situations in the varied metropolitan area, continue to appropriate the rites of the 1979 Prayer Book. However, divergence from these guidelines should be undertaken only in accordance with their purpose, viz. that the rites of the 1979 Prayer Book be administered faithfully and with integrity and that their theological implications be fully realized.

In the light of their responsibilities as chief pastors and liturgical officers of the diocese, the bishops would appreciate an opportunity to confer with any priest and/or parish which is considering a policy which does not conform to these guidelines.

The Diocese of Pennsylvania acknowledges its gratitude for previous work done in several dioceses which have addressed these issues before us. Our greatest debt is to the excellent guidelines developed in the three dioceses of Michigan in 1992-94. We have adopted the general outline of the Michigan work and have shamelessly borrowed a number of paragraphs and sentences.

It is expected that this document will provide the basis for future educational events for clergy and laity and that these guidelines will be widely accepted and implemented. The educational agencies of the diocese can offer resources for those who would like to pursue the lines of thought and practice opened here.

A note on the layout of the following pages: The letters and numbers of the units follow the organization of the "contents" shown above. The text that is set to the left and is in Roman type generally sets forth pastoral *actions*, and the text that is indented and is in italic type generally offers *reasons* or argumentation in support of the actions that are commended. This scheme is not followed through consistently. Some directives imply their rationale, and nothing in italics is required. And the supporting discussions in italics are of many kinds -- some of them seek less to provide rationale than to deal with the complications that pastoral experience always provides. But in general the format carries out this distinction.

These guidelines are issued with the hope that they and the process they may bring into being will lead into deeper joy and satisfaction in ministering the fundamental sacramental act by which persons are brought into the life of Christ and his church.

A. Holy Baptism

A.1: Baptism

[A.1.a] "Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble" (*BCP*, p.298).

[A.1.b] Holy Baptism is a powerful, basically reorienting act in the life of the individual, his or her sponsors and family, and the Christian community; for it is the enactment of a radical, judging, yet grace-bringing gospel. It speaks of death and rebirth in Christ and of passing from darkness to light. In response to this transforming gospel, all the participants in baptism assume weighty responsibilities expressed in the sweeping promises to which the Prayer Book commits them: "Do you renounce Satan?" "Do you turn to Jesus Christ...?" "Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship... persevere in resisting evil... proclaim the Good News... seek and serve Christ in all persons... strive for justice and peace?" (*BCP*, pp.302-305) Parishes desiring to celebrate this sacrament with integrity will show a strong commitment to nurturing individuals and families through the initiation process into full membership and continuing growth and service in Christ.

> *Anglican theology and pastoral practice turn in two directions: On the one hand the tradition seeks to uphold the objectivity of the sacramental system. The structures of the redemptive life do not rest on our changing and undependable experience, but on the gift and promise of God in Christ. Neither redemption nor the church are ours to make, but only ours to receive and maintain. However, such an emphasis were it to stand alone might excuse passivity and credulousness, as though God did everything and our responsible stewardship mattered little. So at the same time, Anglicanism seeks to use such means as it can to secure an informed, convinced, responsible level of faith on the part of its members. The following guidelines seek to express this two-sided way of thinking about what constitutes normative Christian membership.*

[A.1.c] Holy Baptism should not be thought of narrowly as focused on the water action at the font, but rather as a total act which in its fullest expression includes a sequence of *inquiry, self-examination, preparation and prayer*, supported by the entire parish community, leading up to the rite of *water baptism*, the prayers and acts which follow, and culminating in *participation in the Eucharist.* This sequence is followed by *further support, instruction, spiritual growth and renewal* in the context of continuing participation in the life of the community of faith, worship, witness and service.

A.2: Candidates

[A.2.a] Holy Baptism may be administered to candidates of any age. It is not a life-stage rite, but a rite of becoming a Christian. As such it is appropriately used whenever one is responsibly admitted into the community of faith.

The Book of Common Prayer gives primacy to adult conversion and baptism by setting the presentation of "adults and older children" first (pp.298,301). A community of baptized adults always precedes and undergirds infant baptism. At the same time, most persons who come to baptism, now and in the past, are not new converts, but are "second generation" Christians -- children born into families of the church, who are not neutral or unbelievers, but persons claimed by Christ from the time they come on the human scene. The Prayer Book makes full provision for the baptism of children of Christian parents.

Both adult baptism and infant baptism are first-class baptisms -- the Prayer Book offers nothing less. The two can supplement one another -- the adult form emphasizing preparedness and decision on the part of the candidate, and the infant form emphasizing gift and God's prevenient grace. (The distinction should not be overstated: intelligent faith always surrounds infant baptism, and adult baptism celebrates divine gift.) When the church has more or less regularly some experience of both forms, its understanding of the sacrament is enriched.

[A.2.b] Adult candidates are baptized after an extended period of inquiry, self-examination, preparation, and prayer, supported by the parish community.

In baptism, one engages with the gospel and the creed, makes solemn promises, and pledges a way of life. Such commitments should be made willingly and on an informed basis. The way of preparing adults for baptism is provided for in the rites for "The Catechumenate" which are found in The Book of Occasional Services, *Second Edition, pp.112-25 (and see the discussion in paragraph A.4.a below).*

[A.2.c] The baptism of infants also requires pre-baptismal counseling. When the parents who seek the baptism of a child are participating members of the parish, some things will need to be discussed, for each child and each baptism is unique. However, such discussion can assume the parents' general grasp of the faith, the church, and baptism and their intention that the child be nurtured within the Christian community.

However, when parents who approach the church are strangers to the congregation and unknown to the clergy, some inquiry will be made as to what has brought the parents to make their request, and the conversation proceeds from what this exploratory discussion reveals. The inquiry should be conducted in a spirit of hospitality, as an opportunity to share the Gospel.

Adults who are not active members of a congregation and who seek baptism for infants or children should be expected to share in the life and worship of their congregation over a significant period of time prior to the baptism so that they will be able to make their promises with a measure of understanding and will know more about the ways of the community of faith into which they seek to bring their child. (Setting conditions for baptism is a matter that falls within the priest's canonical prerogative; however, when such

conditions are proposed by the incumbent, they might well be considered and concurred in by the vestry or other parish authority.) Without such standards, persons with no identification with the faith or the faith community can be using the church and one of its sacraments for purposes which are not the church's purposes. In this process of formation and instruction, both the parents and the congregation are testing and being tested, but the intention is always that the process will culminate in the baptism of the child (or children).

On preparation for the baptism of children, see the further material in paragraph A.4.b below.

(These paragraphs say "parents," but baptism of a child may be sought by a single parent, in which case singular terms should be edited in by the reader.)

[A.2.d] When a child of a family not connected with the church requests baptism on his or her own initiative, it is appropriate for active worshipping members of a congregation to present that child for baptism. It is essential that such sponsors of such children be serious in their intention to see that the child is nurtured in the Christian faith and that the child's parents actively support the sponsors' intention to bring the child regularly for worship, instruction and fellowship.

Each such candidate should be supported by persons within the church, who if they cannot be the parents may be others. The child's parents, however, should not oppose what the child is doing and not resent the involvement of other adults in the close relation to the child that sponsorship involves.

[A.2.e] All requests for baptism should be taken seriously and treated pastorally. For weighty cause a priest may legitimately refuse a particular request or insist that a family wait for a later time, but clergy must strive to maintain patient and candid dialogue and to convey clearly and lovingly the Church's understanding of faith and baptism.

If in the course of conversing with a family which has requested baptism a priest finds that a similar request had previously been made at another parish and refused, the priest should, in a spirit of collegiality, consult with the pastor who made that refusal, inquiring into its reasons. The first refusal need not be sustained by the second priest, who may think it was unwarranted. But neither should the second priest undercut the serious effort that is being made by the first to uphold responsible standards of baptismal discipline.

Baptisms will not be refused often, and never lightly. But baptism is a gift placed within the church's custody of the redemptive life, not something which can be claimed from the church as a matter of right. If the church is to carry out its task as a baptizing community, it must do what it can to see that what the candidate or the parents and sponsors seek corresponds with what the church offers. Without substantive congruity of intentions at this point, the act of baptism may be gravely diminished and its promises made in bad faith. One does not want to stand in the

way of the gracious outreach of Christ in baptism, but neither does one want to let this sacrament of grace be used for purely social or family purposes. When, after serious inquiry, there seems to be little or no grasp of the meaning of baptism on the part of those who seek it and little willingness to identify with the church's life of faith, worship and service, it is irresponsible to carry out the act.

The church should not be too self-righteous in this matter. Many of the inadequate baptismal ideas and practices that give people on the margin of the church their basis for thinking of baptism as a casual, social act were taught and encouraged by the church itself (or at least by parts of the church) in the past. People whose understanding of baptism is seriously defective may be acting on the best grasp of it they have had any way of obtaining. It can also be the case that people who are hesitant and awkward in approaching the church may have been kept away from it by past church-inflicted pain.

If a serious presentation of baptism, its meaning and its liturgy, is made to those who have indicated their interest, but who as yet do not share the church's understanding, the conversation may be broken off, but resumed later from a more informed starting point. If a "no" must be said at one time, it should always be said with the hope that the attractiveness of the gospel will make its own point, permitting a responsible "yes" to be said at a later time.

[A.2.f] It is desirable that infants be baptized in the parish community in which the child has some likelihood of continued association -- as opposed, for example, to a parish to which the parents are attached only by family ties or a history of past membership, however meaningful.

Pennsylvania is an old diocese, and Philadelphians are people of fixed habits. Requests for baptism in a parents' or grandparents' church are often made. However, baptism is not appropriate apart from life within the community of the faithful. It lays responsibilities not only on the candidates and sponsors but also on the parish community, which must be given reasonable opportunity to fulfill the obligation it undertakes to "support these persons in their life in Christ." Baptism looks to the future rather than the past, and "going home" to a former parish to baptize a child is generally inappropriate.

A.3: Sponsors

[A.3.a] Concerning sponsors: (a) "Each candidate for Holy Baptism is to be sponsored by one or more baptized persons" (*BCP*, p.298). The number of sponsors for either adults or children is not limited or prescribed. (b) At least one sponsor (in addition to the parents) should be an active member of the congregation in which the candidate will be baptized, who will participate fully in the pre-baptismal preparation and support the candidate in his or her growth in faith and service. (c) Sponsors of children normally include their parents. (d) Sponsors should be chosen with the advice and guidance of the priest.

Sponsors represent and interpret the community of faith to the candidate and, in turn, vouch for and interpret the candidate to the community. The sponsors will take a lead in supporting, guiding, and "discipling." Candidates are best sponsored within a community by members of that community.

[A.3.b] Sponsors of adults and older children present their candidates, thereby endorsing them and expressing their intention to support them in their life in Christ.

Sponsors of infants and young children, commonly called "godparents," have an additional role: they speak in the candidate's voice, taking the baptismal vows on their behalf; they also promise in their own right to see that the child is brought up in the Christian faith, and to help the child grow into the full stature of Christ (*BCP*, pp.298,302).

Sponsors who are relatives and intimate friends have a distinctive role to play in the nurture of the child by reason of their close relationships; sponsors who share daily parish life with the newly-baptized have a different and equally important role. At times, persons other than parents can be influential when parents cannot.

In our mobile society, persons who are quite close to a child and the child's parents at the time of baptism may soon (and often with little advance notice) be far away and in less close touch with the family. Distance can be mitigated by daily prayer, by cards or letters on the seasonal festivals, and by gifts representing baptismal anniversaries rather than birthdays.

The responsibilities to which the sponsors give voice at the baptism are not theirs in any exclusive way, but are shared throughout the older generation of the baptizing community. A great part of the support which they promise may in fact be given by others, as they will provide model and support for other children they have not sponsored.

When persons who would be good godparents are at a distance and are unable to attend the baptism, they can be named and certified as godparents, as long as they will carry out, as they can, their godparental responsibilities, and as long as there will be a significant group of sponsoring adults actually at the font for the baptism.

[A.3.c] "Adults and older children" are defined in the rubrics (*BCP*, p.301) as "candidates who are able to answer for themselves," while "infants or younger children" are those who are "unable to answer for themselves." Both are presented by their sponsors, but candidates who speak for themselves make their own responses and vows with their sponsors standing as witnesses and speaking only when the whole congregation speaks.

The Prayer Book does not define "older children," and pastoral discernment may suggest that in some instances, when children are verbal but still quite young, sponsors might appropriately answer along with the child or children.

A.4: Preparation for Baptism

[A.4.a] Spiritual preparation and formation in the Christian life should precede every baptism. The preparation process may be adapted in form and content to the circumstances and needs of the candidates and sponsors. However, congregations which have adult candidates for baptism should seek, with due seriousness, to put into effect "The Catechumenate," the material for which is in *The Book of Occasional Services*, Second Edition, pp.112-25.

This is the church's ritual provision for the preparation of adult candidates for baptism at the Easter Vigil. (It is adaptable for other times of baptism.) Since it is material new to the church, the text provides it with a rather full introduction. The catechumenate (as described in *BOS*) is structured in a series of stages, each of them entered and supported by public liturgical actions.

The process begins with a pre-catechumenal stage of inquiry, exploring what it means to be a Christian and whether or not one wants to become a Christian. One who seeks to be a Christian is enrolled as a catechumen. The length of time of this stage is variable, and there is no curriculum as such. Yet it involves instruction and formation in:

Christian belief about God, human nature, and human life;
the history of salvation as revealed in Scripture;
the ethical implications of Christian living in personal, family, economic, and political spheres;
corporate and private prayer.

The staple items of the catechetical diet are the Scriptures of the eucharistic lectionary and the content of the Baptismal Covenant. (The readings appointed for the pre-Easter weeks are chosen with the needs of persons preparing for baptism particularly in mind.) It is desirable that lay persons assist in leading the preparation sessions.

The Catechumenate is a period of formation in Christ. While it makes use of formal instruction, it is not academic in character. Experience precedes reflection. Catechumens participate in worship regularly with the baptized, and they share in the church's life of service. They are assisted to discern God's call to live out the baptismal covenant and given support in framing a response to that call, discerning gifts for ministry, and beginning to exercise those gifts in the church and the world.

This process is held before the congregation, reminding it of the Christians-in-the-making in its midst. (In many but not all churches which have put the catechumenate into effect, the catechumens are present at the Service of the Word, after which they are dismissed, with prayer and blessing, to do their catechetical work while the baptized remain

for the sacramental meal. This dismissal is a powerful gesture.) Members of the congregation serve as lay catechists and sponsors. The process draws heavily on first-hand encounter with the Scripture readings which the whole community, both catechumens and the baptized, encounter Sunday by Sunday, and it builds on the structures of the Christian Year -- structures which were in their origin shaped by the sacramental event of Easter baptism. Through the catechumenate the whole congregation readdresses its first lessons in faith.

The process passes to candidacy, a few weeks of more intensive preparation leading up to the liturgies of Holy Week, baptism at the Great Vigil (or other appointed time) and first communion. In the period following baptism (a period classically known as *mystagogia*) the newly baptized are given some further account of the compact, and perhaps somewhat dazzling, ritual events of baptism and first communion which they have just experienced. They also need realistic guidance in the new but not easy life upon which they have entered.

> *The printed text in the BOS and a brief sketch such as has been given here can give little idea of the power of this sequence of events when it is enacted in the life of a congregation. The adult catechumenate is being recovered in many parts of the ecumenical church today. Parishes should only attempt to put this process into effect after they have made due preparation. Diocesan resources are available for congregations which would like to explore this old and yet new instrument for bringing persons into the community of Christ.*

[A.4.b] In the case of candidates who are small children, preparation is needed as well, but it will be preparation of parents and godparents. Just what and how much is required will depend on how acquainted these adults are with the church and how much they have done about the introduction of such older children as they may have into the church and its faith. The competence of adults to make renunciations and promises for a child is validated by the extent to which they are carrying out the common Christian promises in their own adult Christian lives.

Parents and sponsors should be helped to readdress their basic Christian commitments in the light of their relation to the child to be baptized. How will they uphold and direct the child? Can they recognize the tension between seeking to create structures of responsible life for the growing child and at the same time giving the child room to grow up in his or her own way? The preparation process particularly explores the important but difficult issues related to Christian family life, parenting, faith development, and the nurture of children in the Christian community against the background of a powerful, attractive secular society which says that life can be complete without God. The birth of a child in the family is ordinarily a time when parents and friends are particularly ready to deal with important issues of parenting and child rearing. But pre-baptismal counseling cannot do more than make a beginning. More will have to be explored later.

Some material outlining a process of pre-baptismal preparation for parents and godparents of infants and young children, including appropriate rites, is in the BOS, *2nd ed., pp.155-58. This material sets forth an important role for the entire congregation, and its implementation requires preparation lest people be taken by surprise by things they are expected to say. This material may be too much and too formalized for some clergy and some congregations to use as it stands, but it might be a source of usable ideas.*

[A.4.c] Sponsors of adults normally participate in the entire sequence of preparation along with the candidates. When the candidates are children, the parents and other sponsors take part in the pre-baptismal preparation.

[A.4.d] Several weeks before the baptism, the names of those who will be baptized, and the names of their sponsors, are published in the parish bulletin so that the congregation may support them in prayer and welcome. They are prayed for by name at the Prayers of the People.

A.5: Occasions and Ceremonial

[A.5.a] "Holy Baptism is appropriately administered within the Eucharist as the chief service of a Sunday or other feast" (*BCP*, p.298).

Baptism is an action of the whole Christian community which incorporates the new members. Hence it is most appropriate to celebrate Baptism in the presence of the congregation which promises to support them in their new life in Christ and to do so when the congregation has met for its community-making common meal.

[A.5.b] "Holy Baptism is especially appropriate at the Easter Vigil, on the Day of Pentecost, on All Saints' Day or the Sunday after All Saints' Day, and on the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord (the First Sunday after the Epiphany). It is recommended that, as far as possible, Baptisms be reserved for these occasions or when a bishop is present" (*BCP*, p.312).

This rubric brings baptism into significant relation to the ritual shaping of time which is the Church Year, associating it with great events in the redemptive story. The celebration of Holy Baptism at the Great Vigil of Easter creates rich and suggestive connections between Christ's death and resurrection and the baptismal dying with Christ and rising to new life in him. The Day of Pentecost emphasizes the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on the church and the baptismal gift of the Spirit. All Saints Day underscores baptism as an entrance into the Communion of Saints; and baptism on the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord unites our baptisms with that of Jesus himself.

The Prayer Book rite "A Thanksgiving for the Birth or adoption of a Child" (BCP pp.439-445) may be used "as soon as convenient after the birth of a child or after

> *receiving a child by adoption." This pastoral office, which involves the congregation, recognizes, in thanksgiving to God, the arrival of a new child in a family. It may be especially desirable to use it if none of the rubrically-mandated times for baptism will occur until some time after the child's arrival. Before the child's baptism the parents will have an opportunity to express their thanks, and they, with the congregation, can dedicate themselves to the task of bringing this child "to love all that is true and noble."*

[A.5.c] The bishop as a "chief pastor" is a symbol of the unity of the Church, and a bishop's visit is one of the occasions designated in the rubric as appropriate for baptism. The bishop, when present, "is expected to preach the Word and preside at Baptism and the Eucharist" (*BCP*, p.298). On such occasions the bishop may designate a priest or deacon to baptize the candidates; but the candidates are presented to and examined by the bishop; the bishop says the Thanksgiving over the Water and the prayer for the Spirit which follows the water baptism, and lays hands on each person baptized, using chrism if desired.

> *The post-baptismal prayer and laying on of hands (with chrism if desired) may be done by a priest in the absence of a bishop, but these actions are the present form, in the Episcopal Church, of the bishop's ancient (Western) initiatory ministry. When a bishop is present, they should be done by the bishop. Adults who are baptized with the laying on of hands by a bishop are considered baptized and confirmed (Canon I. 17.1(d)), and they are not to be presented for confirmation.*

[A.5.d] In the absence of a bishop, a priest presides at the service in its entirety. If the priest uses chrism, it must have been previously consecrated by the bishop (*BCP*, p.298).

[A.5.e] It is appropriate for sponsors to act as readers; they may lead the prayers for the candidates (*BCP*, p.305; rubric on p.312); and "the oblations of bread and wine at the baptismal Eucharist may be presented by the newly baptized or their godparents" (p.313).

[A.5.f] When neither a bishop nor a priest is available, the bishop may authorize a deacon to preside at a baptism (*BCP*, p.312). A deacon who presides omits the prayer for the Spirit on p.308 and the action which follows it. (These are considered priestly actions.) The omitted prayer and signing may be administered at a later occasion by a bishop or a priest .

[A.5.g] In case of emergency, any baptized person may administer baptism in accordance with the form on *BCP*, p.313-14. A baptism so performed should be reported promptly to the parish so that it can be registered. Such a baptism lacks the prayers and pledges of support by the worshipping community. "If the baptized person recovers, the Baptism should be recognized at a public celebration" at which the administration of the water is not repeated but the congregational features of Prayer Book baptism are supplied.

[A.5.h] The rite of Baptism is not to be repeated for a person from any Christian tradition who has been baptized with water in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, regardless of his/her age, or the method or circumstances of the baptism.

When there is doubt as to whether a person has been so baptized, Conditional Baptism may be used (*BCP*, p.313).

[A.5.i] Water is the visible sign in Baptism and should be used generously.

> *The baptismal water is already a token; a small amount of water is a token of a token. The water carries significant biblical imagery (see the prayer of Thanksgiving over the Water, p.306). It links us to the waters of creation (Genesis1), the Flood (Genesis 6-9;1Pet.3:2f), the Exodus passage through the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15), and Jesus' baptism and anointing by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34).*

As to the mode of baptism, the rubric that directs the actual baptism (following a long tradition of Anglican Prayer Books) mentions immersion first, suggesting that it is the preferred mode. The rubric also makes "pouring" water on the candidate (on the candidate's head) an acceptable mode. It says nothing about anything as innocuous as "sprinkling."

> *Immersion makes a clear connection between Christ's death and burial and our burial with Christ in baptism. The point should neither be overstressed nor handed outright to the Baptists, for the imagery of washing, which would not necessarily suggest immersion, is as prominent in the baptismal tradition as is the imagery of death and burial. Moreover, in the ancient world the dead were often buried by placing the body in a cave, and token burial could even be by scattering earth on the body.*

It is desirable that the baptismal space be generous and be in a location that befits a major sacramental act. The font should be in a place where it can easily be seen by the congregation. It is to be filled with clean water immediately before the Thanksgiving over the Water (*BCP*, p.306), and it is desirable that this be done in such a way that the water being poured can be heard. A rubric directs that the persons who must be near the font be so arranged as not to obstruct the sight lines of the congregation (*BCP*, p.313).

> *Within the eucharistic room, the foci for reading and preaching, for baptism, and for the eucharistic meal should stand in intelligible relation to one another; none should dominate; and none should be obscured. Where the font is in an out-of-the-way place and cannot be moved, it is probably better to provide a temporary bowl in front of the congregation than to place the baptismal action out of sight of the people. The people are primary, and furniture should be placed in relation to the formation of the congregation.*
>
> *With regard to fonts and baptismal space, when a new building is planned or an old one is redesigned, changes can be introduced. Many contemporary buildings have a large font in which infants can be "dipped discreetly." and some have a pool suitable for adult immersion. Many new designs place the font in a spacious,*

well-located area of the eucharistic room. These are visual, spatial signs of sacramental priorities.

*But many churches must make do with old structures, their floor plans and furnishings. Many congregations have inherited a small font, inconspicuously located. They must make trade-offs and do what they can. If baptism is one of the central sacramental actions of the church, our spatial statements should bear out that valuation, although they often subvert it.**

[A.5.j] Following the baptism with water, there is a prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and an act of sealing (marking) which may be carried out by the priest (by the bishop if present) laying a hand on the person's head and making the sign of the cross on the forehead (BCP, p.308). At this action, an anointing with the oil of chrism (which is allowed, but not required) carries deep early precedent.

Anointing also carries rich biblical symbolism: the anointing of priests and kings (e.g. 1 Samuel 16:13, Exodus 29:1-7, 1 Kings 19:16); Jesus as the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ (Lk.4:18, Mark 8:29, Acts 10:38); Jesus' anointing just prior to his death (Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9); the sealing of Christians by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:14;4:30); the sealing of the elect in the heavenly vision in Revelation (Revelation 7:4-14). The sealing of the newly-baptized symbolizes their participation in Christ's royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9ff).

The chrism (olive oil mixed with oil of balsam or other fragrant oil) for use in this action must be consecrated by the bishop; it connects each baptism with the bishop even when the bishop is not present. Chrism is blessed by the bishop at a diocesan service and is available for priests. However, chrism may also be consecrated when the bishop presides at baptism in the parish; and when there is no baptism on the occasion of the bishop's visitation, chrism may be consecrated immediately following the postcommunion prayer. (See the form in *BOS,* 2nd Edition, pp.209-10.)

The priest decides whether chrism is used or not used. Anointing had not been in the text of our baptism rites since the Prayer Book of 1549. Rather, the sign of the cross (along with some other verbal suggestions of confirmation) was prescribed in the post-baptismal prayer of the Prayer Book, to the annoyance of the Puritans. The use of chrism was probably dropped from 1552 onward on the grounds that it brought into the baptismal action a material element which had no New Testament warrant. The Bible does use the imagery of anointing to speak of Christ, the Christian, and the new life, but there is no clear record of the use of oil at baptism in the apostolic generation. However, it was introduced very early and became a part of the baptismal rites of East and West. The use of chrism at baptism was reintroduced in Anglicanism unofficially in the mid-1800's and stirred some controversy. However, such conviction as there was that chrism should not be permitted has long since moderated, and the practice had become

widespread. When the 1979 Prayer Book was in preparation, there seemed to be little feeling in the church that chrism should be forbidden, as long as its use was not made mandatory.

[A.5.k] The Paschal Candle is normally burning beside the font during Holy Baptism, reminding the congregation that each baptism is a participation in Christ's death and resurrection. The imagery of light (the favorite image for baptism in the early church) can be enacted further: "After the Baptism, a candle (which may be lighted from the Paschal Candle) may be given to each of the newly baptized or to a godparent" (*BCP*, p.313).

[A.5.l] It is desirable that the certificates that are given to the persons baptized and to the sponsors be of a style that befits an important life-moment. The baptism must be recorded in the Parish Register and the entry signed by the officiant. Care should be taken that the information, such as the spelling of names and the dates of birth, on certificates and in the Parish Register be accurate, not only so that the sacramental acts of the church be reliably recorded, but also in case this record is at some future time sought for legal purposes.

B: Baptism and Eucharist

[B.1] The rite of Holy Baptism as it stands in the Prayer Book is not complete in itself, but it passes on to culminate in the eucharist (*BCP*, p.310). Thus the two great sacraments of the gospel are connected by the very shape of the rites on the Prayer Book pages.

[B.2] The structural link between baptism and the eucharist undergirds the experience of the individual. Newly baptized persons of whatever age should receive the Holy Communion, beginning on the occasion of their baptism and continuing regularly thereafter.

Since "Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit" (BCP, p.298), it should lead at once to the principal sacramental thing that Christians do -- partake at the Lord's table. The newly-born must be fed.

Baptism and eucharist are linked theologically. Both acts signify and effect the whole gospel. However, the two differ in function: baptism is an initiatory rite and (like being born) it is unrepeated, while the Holy Communion is a rite of sustenance which (like feeding) is repeated regularly.

The two gospel sacraments are linked in experience, as they are in theology and in rite. Participation in the eucharist is the sacramental completion of the initiation effected in baptism; it is the continuing expression of the common life in Christ. In the economy of the sacraments, the eucharist begins in baptism, and what is begun in baptism is carried forward in the eucharist. Eligibility for the Holy Communion is not reserved for an elite within the baptized community, but is one of the rights of the baptized.

The theological and experiential connection between the two sacraments of redemption cannot be perceived if the two ritual events are separated by several years.

Since the 1970 General Convention permitted children to be admitted to communion prior to confirmation, a variety of practices has evolved. Some parishes admit all persons to communion upon baptism, others only admit children at a later time. At the 1988 General Convention the House of Bishops recognized "the practice of some parishes which customarily give first communion to infants at their baptism, then next offer them communion when they and their parents express a desire that they receive." While practical considerations may make it advisable for some children not to receive communion for a time following their baptism, the important thing would be to recognize that they are eligible to receive by reason of their baptism. And no one who is eligible to receive the Holy Communion should be kept from it without compelling reason.

This immediate link of baptism to one's admission to communion has obvious implications concerning confirmation [on which see sec. H.2 below]. An Anglican Liturgical Consultation held in 1991 said that: "Confirmation and other rites of affirmation have a continuing pastoral role in the renewal of faith among the baptized but are in no way to be seen as a completion of baptism or as necessary for admission to communion." (This statement repeats the judgment of the House of Bishops, made in 1973 and again in 1988).

When the church introduces a change in the place of children in the sacramental economy, there is need for patience, for the matter is in part attitudinal, bound up with models of behavior which have been learned and internalized. Not everyone will accept such change quickly, and not all who make it will make it at the same pace.

Yet patience with adult sensibilities should not penalize the children. When children are admitted to the table by some parishes and parents, but not by all, they may be caught between authority figures some of whom say "You can't. You mustn't," while others say "You can. You should." Some of their friends are doing something which they are told they cannot do. The bishops spoke to this matter at the General Convention of 1988, calling for pastoral sensitivity "in not forcing the sacrament on an unwilling child, in not rejecting a baptized child who is reaching out for communion with God in Christ, and in respecting the position of the parents of a child in this regard."

A shift to the regular communion of all the baptized, including infants, requires education of the whole congregation. Since the late Middle Ages the Western Church has treated the two great sacraments of the gospel differently; except among the Baptists, conscious understanding was not regarded as necessary for baptism, but it was considered necessary for receiving communion. However, that

difference is now widely questioned and rejected. Postponing a baptized child's admission to communion is not consistent with the church's understanding of baptism as full Christian initiation. As the regular rite of nourishment of all the baptized, the eucharist expresses the fullness of Christ's Body when all members present share in the gifts of Christ's Body and Blood.

Parishes which do not admit all the baptized to communion are encouraged to study and reflect upon the theological and pastoral implications of their eucharistic discipline.

A concern frequently voiced is that young children do not understand what they are doing in receiving communion. But communicant practice should not be made dependent on a grasp of eucharistic doctrine. If it were so qualified, who would receive communion? Who would determine each communicant's competence? What level of understanding should be deemed adequate? None of us, children or adults, can ever fully comprehend the meaning of the eucharist. We are admitted to the Lord's table, as we are to baptism, by grace and not as a consequence of our own achievement.

Children as well as adults come to appreciate the meaning of the eucharistic feast through participation in the sacrament over time. Experience precedes conceptualization. A child is ready to learn by sacramental experience long before he or she will learn by ordered statement. When children do begin to think about the eucharist, their years of participation, beginning as early as they can remember, will have given them something to think about.

[B.3] The use of any rite or ceremony of admission to communion should be avoided completely, even for children who are in fact coming to the Lord's Table for the first time.

Those parishes in which children do not customarily receive communion until some time after baptism have a natural tendency to want such a rite, but they draw on a Roman model which was only begun in the last century and which is questioned by many present-day Roman liturgists.

Persons are admitted to the Holy Communion by reason of their standing as baptized Christians. The introduction of any further rite qualifies the centrality and completeness of baptism. The church does have a rite of admission to the eucharist; it is Holy Baptism.

[B.4] Small children who are admitted to the Holy Communion because they are baptized Christians obviously give the church a continuing task of providing education appropriate to their growing minds. Even very young children have models for sacramental participation in their experience of joy and sharing at occasions of eating. However, as they grow, children (indeed, adults as well) need opportunities to reflect on their experience of the eucharist and to study its scriptural and theological foundations as well as what it

implies for spiritual and ethical life. Latent meanings should be brought to articulateness -- a process which is never-ending. Parents and sponsors have a primary role in helping children grow into conscious and active participation within the eucharistic liturgy. The faithful celebration of the Liturgy of the Word and education programs within the parish can provide structures which enable all persons to take part fully in the congregation's worship and approach the table with understanding, love and awe.

[B.5] Clergy or lay persons who have not been where small children are regularly communicated and have not seen it done may wonder how it can be done and be held back for lack of modeling. Infants may receive Communion in one of several ways: A parent may take a small fragment of bread, dip it in the wine, and place it in the baby's mouth. A eucharistic minister may administer wine, using a spoon. And in some places a parent or a eucharistic minister dips a finger into the chalice and allows the infant to suck the wine from the finger.

> *How small children are communicated is a matter in which practice may well differ, for people will differ in what they find convenient and acceptable. If the practice is being introduced, it might be discussed with the affected parents, and congregations and clergy in the diocese might share their experience. We can and do administer the Holy Communion to persons -- adults as well as children -- in a variety of ways.*
>
> *Very small children can take liquid, but not solid food. Since the sacramental presence is indivisible, those who receive only bread or only wine participate fully in communion. From the age of one or two, most children are capable of receiving bread and wine in the same manner as adults.*

[B.6] Baptized persons, including children, who have been receiving the Holy Communion in one congregation must never be denied communion in another parish on the ground of different local customs regarding admission to communion.

> *An agreement to this effect was made in the House of Bishops in 1972, but in the years since it has often been forgotten or disregarded. Excommunication of baptized persons is strictly limited to the situations described in the disciplinary rubrics in the BCP, p.409.*

[B.7] Any person who has been baptized with water, in the name of the Trinity, regardless of age, denomination, or method of baptismal administration, and who wishes to receive communion in the Episcopal Church, and who is spiritually prepared (*BCP, p.860*), is welcome to the Lord's Table in any parish of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

> *The "one Baptism" is the chief sign that beyond the church's grievous divisions, all believers are one in Christ. Baptism is not an act specific to one's denomination, but an entry into Christ and the Great Church. Since it is "full*

initiation," persons who are baptized and are communicants in good standing in their own churches should be welcome in all churches.

C: Living the Christian Life after Baptism

[C.1] Baptism is a birth, an event from which a new life in the Spirit takes its beginning. It always looks forward. This new life is shared with one's fellow Christians, helping and being helped. It is shared with Christ now and always. It is, by our common baptismal pledges, a regulated life, under the discipline of grace.

[C.2] In the baptismal liturgy all Christians who are present vow to "do all in [their] power to support [newly baptized] persons in their life in Christ" (*BCP*, p.303). The congregation is called by this vow to structure its life so that its members might fulfill that pledge. In addition to the general ministry of word and sacraments, the provision of such things as prayer groups, support groups, discussion groups, and educational events would allow the newly baptized and their sponsors to join with others to reflect on their spiritual journey, seek to discern their gifts for ministry, and explore opportunities for service and witness in daily life.

It is possible for baptism to seem like an end rather than a beginning -- perhaps especially so when adults are baptized. In the early church, baptism was followed by a brief period of further instruction (called "mystagogia"), usually by the bishop, which did not look forward to baptism but back to explain what had taken place on Easter morning and to help the newly baptized to find themselves in the new life into which they had been brought. Today the structures of instruction and support which are brought together in the weeks prior to baptism should not be allowed to disappear once baptism has taken place, although they might well need to be reconfigured.

[C.3] The regular renewal of baptismal vows by the whole congregation is an important expression of the centrality of baptism in the Christian life. We do not grow beyond our baptism; rather, we spend a lifetime growing into it. We can use liturgical reminders of our sacramental starting place and the enduring relation with Christ which was begun then. In a sense, at every eucharist, every absolution, or every time we say the Apostles' Creed we are reminded of our baptism, if we see the connections. The renewal of our baptismal commitment is made articulate when the congregation joins in saying the promises at every baptism. The Renewal of Baptismal Vows may take the place of the Nicene Creed at the eucharist if there are no baptisms on the designated baptismal days: the Great Vigil of Easter, the Day of Pentecost, All Saints Day or the Sunday after All Saints Day, and the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord (*BCP*, p.292-94).

(The occasions of corporate restatement of baptismal vows, which can to a great extent be placed on the liturgical calendar in advance, are complemented by individual and unpredictable occasions of renewal, on which see sec.D, below.)

[C.4] All Christians are ministers by virtue of their baptism (*BCP*, p.855). Since baptism leads to ministry, congregations may want to make use of The Form of Commitment to Christian Service (*BCP*, p.420-21) to commission baptized persons to specific forms of the service of Christ in the world. (It is not intended for church tasks such as commissioning persons for membership on the vestry or the altar guild.) Preparation for the rite should include discernment, i.e., prayerful reflection on one's gifts and on the work being undertaken. The congregation should be invited to support this preparation and commitment with prayer in the same manner as it supports candidates during their preparation for baptism.

D: Rites of Renewal of Faith: Confirmation, Reception, Reaffirmation

[D.1] Holy Baptism is a single, unrepeatable act through which a person enters upon a life of faith characterized by continuing journey and growth (and at times by lapses and restoration, weariness and refreshment). No additional acts or rituals are required at any time to complete baptism, or to activate or validate it. However, 20th century Christian experience is often discontinuous, and beyond the corporate acts of renewal provided in the liturgy, individual baptized persons often need opportunities, at crucial points in their lives, to express a renewed commitment to their faith and to the promises of their baptism -- which it is desirable that they do in the presence of the Christian community and of the church's chief pastor and sign of unity, the bishop. These points occur at unpredictable and individualized occasions. The present practice of the Episcopal Church is to distinguish different types of such moments and to express them liturgically in similar but distinct ways as Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation. In each instance, the candidate makes a mature affirmation of faith, and the bishop lays hands upon and prays for or welcomes each one by name.

> *Baptism stands at the beginning of life in Christ and the church, and it is not repeated, for it is a sign of an enduring bond in which God is always faithful. But on our part, we are forgetful and neglectful -- if not at times outright rebellious -- in that relation. Our side of the baptismal covenant needs to be restated at new points in our life. The liturgy now contains a considerable range of reminders; it is a prompter for our weak memories.*
>
> *(The Prayer Book prints material on pp.303 and 309f for the occasions in which these acts of renewal are combined with baptism, and on pp. 412-19 for the times when they are used at a bishop's visit and there is no baptism. A rubric on p.312 allows the Baptismal Vows to be used in place of the Nicene Creed when on the days mandated for baptism there are no baptisms.)*

These acts provide ways in which adult church members, at times and in circumstances suited to their life situation, come before the bishop to "make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of Baptism... and to receive the laying on of hands" (*BCP*, p.412, second rubric). Thus the bishop has a pastoral role in membership and maintenance appropriate to an episcopally-ordered church

These acts of the bishop are, in a sense, recognitions of processes that have begun long before, both in the life of the persons presented and in the congregation. When a bishop confirms, or receives, or acknowledges the reaffirmation of baptismal vows, the brief ritual act takes its significance from the preparation that goes before it and the life that follows it.

> *The Prayer Book provisions for these ritual actions should be read in connection with Canon I.17.sec.1 which defines membership. This canon was carefully drafted to correspond with the terms and intentions of the 1979 Prayer Book.***

Confirmation

[D.2] Confirmation is an opportunity for persons who were baptized at an early age and have never made formally and publicly a mature affirmation of their faith to make such a commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism. This affirmation is made before the bishop, who lays hands on each one (a gesture of bonding, blessing, and commissioning) and prays for each by name (*BCP*, p.309,418).

> *Baptism is a gift of grace, but if one was baptized at a very early age, one's awareness of and responsible engagement with that gift must come in later years as one grows into self-understanding. There is something unfulfilled about a baptism, at whatever age it is administered, to which a person has not responded with a conscious confession of faith. Although one's response to baptism may grow quite gradually and be a pervasive factor in one's life from the start, it is likely to have times of special awareness which require moments of special expression.*
>
> *Confirmation is the first time that a person who was baptized at an early age makes a public affirmation of his or her baptismal vows before the congregation and receives the laying on of hands by the bishop (BCP, p.860). It is a pastoral act, seeking to assure (in the limited way that such a discipline can) that the adult members of the church who were baptized in childhood will be encouraged to grow into maturity in their faith. (The sacramental, initiatory features of Christian initiation which had been part of Confirmation prior to the 1979 Prayer Book are now contained in Holy Baptism. Confirmation is not a part of an initiatory sequence, but is a renewal of promises by one who is a baptized, communicating Christian.) This act invites a person who has grown up within the church to mark his or her passage into adult responsibilities; it is a sign that one is taking more conscious charge of one's life in relation to God; it recognizes and blesses the important things that happen in the lives of young persons.*
>
> *Since Confirmation expresses one's adult response to the gift of baptism, it should be understood as a rite of maturity, not of puberty. Candidates for Confirmation are expected to be mature in their convictions and themselves responsible for the major decisions in their lives without parental direction regarding, e.g., their use*

of time, their choice of relationships, the nature and direction of their commitments. Normally such maturity is not achieved until high school years, and it may be later than that. It is inappropriate to designate all young persons of a certain age or grade level as confirmands or to pressure individuals to present themselves for Confirmation in the absence of clear motivation, commitment, or initiative on their part. It is, however, appropriate to encourage motivation, commitment and initiative.

Baptized children of parents who are received into the Episcopal Church should be welcome in the life of a congregation, including the Lord's Table. However, if they have not previously done what is "expected" in the Episcopal Church of persons who are baptized at an early age, viz. that they make "a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their baptism and receive the laying on of hands by a bishop" (BCP, p.412), when they come to sufficient maturity, they should be encouraged to make a public affirmation of their baptismal vows and be confirmed. Their formal renewal of the Baptismal Covenant is their first occasion of responding in an adult way to what was done for them in early childhood.

The "confirmation rubric" of former Prayer Books (which seemed to forbid persons who lacked episcopal confirmation to come to the Holy Communion) does not appear in the 1979 BCP, and (as has been indicated in earlier sections of these guidelines) persons, whether baptized in the Episcopal Church or in some other, are admitted to the Holy Communion and to full membership by reason of their baptism, not baptism plus Confirmation (see D.3 below and Canon I.17.1(a)).

Reception

[D.3] Persons who have been baptized with water in the Name of the Trinity and who have come to full standing as members of another Christian communion but who now desire to live their faith within the fellowship of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion are presented to the bishop for reception. With the congregation, they renew the basic promises of baptism, which include the ancient baptismal creed -- sign of their fundamental standing in the life and love of God. They are recognized and welcomed by the bishop, by name and with the laying on of hands, a gesture of blessing and bonding (*BCP*, p.310, 418).

Since baptism is full Christian initiation, and since it stands as a sign of unity among all Christian groups, all baptized persons who have been members in any other church, upon coming to the Episcopal Church should be received. They have no sacramental deficiency that must be supplied.

[In the past (without rubrics or canons authorizing the practice or scholarly argumentation defending it) persons from the Orthodox and the Roman

communions have been received while persons from other Christian communions have been confirmed. The practice is now under question and in change:

Persons from the Orthodox and the Roman church have been received largely because they were taken to have already received episcopal confirmation. However, members of the Orthodox churches are not confirmed by a bishop, but are baptized and chrismated by a priest. In the Roman Communion, while many members are baptized in infancy and later confirmed by a bishop, the persons who are in increasing numbers baptized as adults are (following the official Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults) usually confirmed at their baptism by a priest and at once receive communion. Persons from these communions, when they come to the Episcopal Church, should all be received, as they have been in the past, not because they have been confirmed by a bishop (which many of them have not been), but because they are baptized Christians of adult competence.

Many persons who come from the major Protestant communions have been baptized in infancy and later (often after a lengthy period of catechesis) been confirmed by the local pastor, at which time they ratified the promises of their baptism. Other persons come from the churches which practice "believer's baptism" and will have made an adult profession of their faith as a precondition of their baptism. All of these persons should also be received. They are baptized Christians who have, in ways appropriate to the traditions from which they come, made an adult commitment of faith. But they are received on the basis of their baptism, whose promises they now renew before the congregation and the bishop.

*Because reception involves the mature renewal of baptismal promises plus the bishop's laying on of hands, persons who are received are for canonical purposes considered confirmed (see Canon I.17.1(d)).]****

Preparing candidates for reception is an important pastoral responsibility, but what is done will vary widely from person to person. In a sense, the first gestures of "reception" are extended by the welcoming congregation. Some persons come to the Episcopal Church after an informed search. Yet self-taught persons often have spotty knowledge and lingering misconceptions. Other persons who seek to be received may know little about either the Episcopal Church or the Christian faith, and they must begin with Christian basics. Persons who seek to be received are ordinarily eager to learn more about this church which has attracted them. Their preparation should inform them concerning the Episcopal Church, its history, its teachings, and its ways, but it should also be a time of formation in a community of commitment to Christ, of ordered worship and of faithful service, such as is described in the Baptismal Covenant. Whatever is done to bring such persons to the moment of formal reception should take care to affirm, not denigrate their former Christian affiliation.

Adults who are received will sometimes be parents of small children. The theology that lets adults speak for children at baptism -- a theology usually based on the unity of the household -- may be extended to cover the parents' decision to live the baptismal promises in a new faith community, a decision which carries their baptized children as well. Such children are enrolled as baptized, communicating members, and in ways suited to their age they begin to take part in the church's life. As they come of age they will have the same opportunity as any other child in the church to declare their faith at Confirmation.

Reaffirmation

[D.4] The act of reaffirmation of the baptismal promises is offered in the Prayer Book with little description of its purpose and little guidance for using it well. It has two principal functions:

(1) It is suitable for persons who were baptized as adults by someone other than a bishop (that would ordinarily be the parish priest). Their baptism is complete. They are not persons who were baptized as children and who are now making their first adult affirmation of faith; they made an adult affirmation at their baptism. Hence they are not to be confirmed. But the Prayer Book expects that all persons in the church will, in ways appropriate to their situations, make a profession of their faith before the bishop and receive the laying on of hands (*BCP*, p.412). Persons who were baptized as adults and who will thus have been receiving communion regularly should take an early opportunity to reaffirm their faith before a bishop, who, as chief pastor in an episcopally-ordered communion, recognizes and blesses the membership into which they have been brought by their baptism. (Persons who make such a reaffirmation are considered, for canonical purposes, confirmed, Canon I.17.1(d).)

(2) Reaffirmation is also available as a pastoral support for persons who return to the church after a period of lapse from Christian faith and practice, or for persons who have come to some sort of marked advance in their life of faith and ministry -- an advance they would like to share and celebrate. Their initiative is met by the bishop's prayer and laying on of hands -- a gesture of healing, blessing and commissioning.

This act is repeatable. It helps to express and interpret the "passages" or life-stages which continue throughout our life of faith, as they do in all adult experience. The recalling of the promises of baptism connects one's present in the life in grace with one's sacramental beginning point.

There sometimes may be struggle, regret and tears in the experience that brings an adult Christian to this ritual event, but all of that should have been worked through beforehand so that the public act is celebrational. Often the occasion that prompts this reaffirmation will be a matter of public knowledge; however, there may be times when it is clearly private and will not be shared -- except for the opportunity it gives the community to share in the joy of a fellow Christian.

[D.5] The public ratification of the vows of baptism by an adult is an important, deliberate act, and, like all important acts in one's life, should not be gone into hastily. Normally, the persons who are making a formal act of reaffirmation are prepared quite thoroughly and over a substantial period of time.

The congregation should be enabled to uphold in prayer the persons who will be confirmed, received or make reaffirmations for some weeks prior to the bishop's visit.

The preparation of candidates will be quite variable, depending on the candidates' age, familiarity with the church, experience of life, the route of their spiritual journey, and the occasion of the affirmation that each one is making.

This work of preparing candidates for the reaffirmation of the promises of baptism is usually undertaken conscientiously, and the care given to it should not be subverted by impulsive volunteering by candidates, sudden urging by too eager clergy, or impromptu invitations by the bishop.

If for reasons of economy it is desirable to prepare candidates for Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation along with candidates for baptism, care should be taken to emphasize the full and complete Christian membership of those who are already baptized. The baptized are not to be called "catechumens," and rites of the catechumenate are not appropriate for them. The pattern of the catechumenal process may be used or adapted for preparing persons for acts of ratification of the baptismal promises as long as it is kept clear that these persons are not catechumens looking toward baptism, but are baptized Christians looking towards an act of affirmation suited to their stage in the life of faith.

There is some material in BOS, 2nd ed., pp.132-141, for Preparing Baptized Persons for the Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. Its pastoral intent is fine, although probably in many places clergy would find it unnecessarily heavy and detailed. Yet it might be looked at as a source of usable ideas.

The expectation of "mature commitment" in Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation is not to be understood in such a way as to prohibit any element of doubt or questioning about the Christian faith. Searching or questioning is an integral part of believing and of spiritual maturation and is not definitively outgrown or left behind at some moment or stage of development.

[D.6] The act(s) of Confirmation, Reception, and Reaffirmation may be done when there is a baptism or when there is none. These episcopal actions are ordinarily followed by the peace, (the Prayers of the People, if desired), the offertory and the eucharist at which the bishop presides.

Conclusion

The 1979 Prayer Book has restored baptism to a central place in the church's life, significantly linked with Easter and with the eucharist and expressing on God's part the gift of grace and on our part the fundamental commitments of Christian faith and life. These guidelines are intended to encourage the people and parishes of the diocese to carry out our welcome of new Christians into the Body of Christ and of Christians of other traditions into the Episcopal Church as wholeheartedly and responsibly as we can and to help us all to grow more deeply into the life we begin and the vows we take at our baptism.

** On furnishings and fonts see: Marion J. Hatchett, "Architectural Implications of the Book of Common Prayer," in Occasional Papers of the Standing Liturgical Commission, No.7, and William Seth Adams, "Decoding the Obvious: Reflections on Baptismal Ministry in the Episcopal Church," in Ruth Meyers, ed., Baptism and Ministry, pp.1-18.*

*** The Prayer Book has precedence over the canons, and the 1979 revision of the liturgy made a new canon on membership necessary. The resulting Canon I.17.1 is not obscure, but it is closely written, and it remains little understood. Following a basic description of membership as constituted in baptism (sec.1(a)), it sets forth (sec.1(b-d)) the ways in which persons can come to be regarded for canonical purposes as baptized and confirmed.*

Subsection (c) describes confirmation in terms that have in mind persons who grow up in the church and who are expected as adults, "after appropriate instruction," to make a mature affirmation of their faith and its responsibilities and be confirmed by a bishop. See BCP, p.860.

Then subsection (d) identifies other ways in which one may come to be considered "for the purpose of this and all other Canons as both baptized and confirmed." Anyone is so regarded

- *who is baptized as an adult and who at the time of baptism receives the laying on of hands by a bishop,*
- *who is baptized as an adult and who at some later time receives the laying on of hands by a bishop in Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows,*
- *who was confirmed by a bishop in the apostolic succession in any church and who was later received into the Episcopal Church by a bishop,*
- *who received the laying on of hands by a bishop at Confirmation or at Reception.*

In effect, this canon makes Confirmation, Reception and Reaffirmation equivalent acts for establishing one's full status in the church. None is initiatory;

all are pastoral acts which involve the affirmation of baptismal vows by an adult baptized person and the laying on of hands by a bishop of the Episcopal Church.

**** For full argumentation on the matter sketched here see "To Confirm or to Receive?" an essay by Daniel B. Stevick published in Baptism and Ministry, Ruth Meyers, ed., Church Hymnal Corp., 1994, pp.55-85.*

suggested further reading:

Ball, Peter, *Adult Believing: A Guide to the Christian Initiation of Adults*. Mowbray, 1988. Written by an Anglican with considerable experience of modern Roman practice.

Buchanan, Colin, ed., *Nurturing Children in Communion: Essays from the Boston Consultation.* Grove Liturgical Study No.44, Grove Books, 1985. Informative and clarifying Anglican essays, with a statement and some recommendations from an International Liturgical Consultation, 1985.

Eastman, A. Theodore, *The Baptizing Community: Christian Initiation and the Local Congregation.* Second edition, Morehouse-Barlow, 1991. A serious pastoral work which explores the implications of the 1979 BCP rites and encourages parishes to discover the fundamental place of baptism in the ecclesial life.

Holeton, David R., ed., *Christian Initiation in the Anglican Communion*, Grove Worship Series No.118, Grove Books,1991. Findings from the Fourth International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Toronto,1991. Important.

Holeton, David R., ed., *Growing in Newness of Life*, Anglican Book Center, Toronto, 1991. Essays from The International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, Toronto, 1991, which approach baptism from many sides.

Merriman, Michael, ed., *The Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate*. Church Hymnal Corporation, 1987. Papers from a 1988 national liturgical conference on the catechumenate; several are outstanding.

Meyers, Ruth A., ed. and introd., *Baptism and Ministry*. Liturgical Studies One. Church Hymnal Corporation, 1994. A gathering of papers, several of which are pertinent to these Guidelines, especially W.S. Adams, "Decoding the Obvious: Reflections on Baptismal Ministry in the Episcopal Church," D.B. Stevick, "To Confirm or To Receive?" and C.P. Price, "Rites of Initiation."

Meyers, Ruth A., ed., *Children at the Table*, Church Hymnal Corporation, 1995. A first rate Anglican symposium.

Mitchell, L.L., *Praying Shapes Believing*: A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer, Morehouse-Barlow. A general exposition of the BCP; the author was a member of the Drafting Committee for the Baptism rite, and his fifth chapter on Christian initiation is 35 pages of excellent material.

Mitchell, L.L., "The American Episcopal Church," a chapter in Mitchell's *Initiation and the Churches*, Pastoral Press, 1991, pp.137-52. An essay about the Prayer Book rite written to inform an ecumenical readership.

Stevick, Daniel B., *Baptismal Moments: Baptismal Meanings*. Church Hymnal Corporation, 1987. A full-length study of the historical development of Christian initiation, with emphasis on Anglicanism; an analysis of the present-day theological and pastoral issues in Christian initiation; the final two chapters are a commentary on the rites of the 1979 BCP.

Office of Evangelism Ministries, The Episcopal Church Center, *The Catechumenal Process: Adult Initiation and Formation for Christian Life and Ministry*. Church Hymnal Corporation, 1990. A resource for congregations seeking to implement the catechumenal process; useful, but not adequate by itself.

The Church Hymnal Corporation publishes *Holy Baptism and Related Rites of the Episcopal Church*, which asembles all of the rites relating to baptism, preparation for baptism, and Reaffirmations of the Baptismal Covenant.

Associated Parishes has brochures on "The Catechumenate: Formation for Church Membership," "Celebrating Redemption: The Liturgies of Lent, Holy Week, and the Great Fifty Days," "The Great Vigil of Easter: A Commentary," and "Holy Baptism: A Liturgical and Pastoral Commentary."

For the many useful and important historical studies, see the extensive bibliography in *Baptismal Moments: Baptismal Meanings*.

Roman Catholic books, pamphlets, articles, journals, and videos on adult baptism and the catechumenate are abundant. Much of this resource is quite usable.

[Prepared by the Catechumenal Process Committee; principal author, Daniel B. Stevick, STD.

Freely adapted from Guidelines prepared and adopted by the three Michigan Dioceses, 1992-94.

Submitted to Bishop Allen Bartlett, December, 1994; revised, January, 1995, incorporating suggestions by Bishop Bartlett; presented to the clergy of the diocese, March, 1995; revised in response to clergy discussion.]